



Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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State Leaders Release Report on Criminal Justice Reform Measures

BOSTON – Governor Charlie Baker, Senate President Stan Rosenberg, House Speaker Robert DeLeo, and Supreme Judicial Court Chief Justice Ralph Gants, along with The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center released a report today which, along with related legislation, outlines ways in which Massachusetts can enhance public safety, avoid nearly \$10 million in projected corrections costs by 2023 and accelerate further reduction of its incarcerated population.

Compared to other states Massachusetts has a relatively low overall incarceration rate. However, there remains room for improvement. Two-thirds of those released from Houses of Correction and more than half of those released from the Department of Correction recidivate within three years. With corrections spending over a billion dollars per year the Governor, the Speaker, the Senate President, and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court requested that the Council of State Governments Justice Center conduct a data driven analysis to assist in the development of recommendations to reduce recidivism, improve public safety and generate savings.

A bipartisan, inter-branch steering committee and working group were established to support this work. Between January 2016 and January 2017, the 25-member working group met six times, and its five-member steering committee met seven times to review analyses conducted by the CSG Justice Center and discuss policy options. In

assisting the working group and steering committee, CSG Justice Center staff analyzed more than 13 million state records, conducted more than 300 in-person meetings, and helped craft research-backed policy options to address the state's criminal justice system challenges.

To that end, policy options outlined in the CSG Justice Center's report reflect a three-pronged strategy including legislative, administrative and budgetary actions that each branch of government will take to help reduce recidivism within the Commonwealth. These actions will incentivize participation and expand access to pre- and post-release programming, strengthen post-release supervision, streamline the parole release process and improve and standardize data collection and performance monitoring across the criminal justice system. Actions include a commitment to increased funding for substance use and work training programming, enhancing post-release supervision, and expanding access to earned good time credits for completing recidivism-reduction programs during incarceration.

"Massachusetts should be proud that our prison population has declined by 1,300 inmates over the last two years, leaving us with one of the lowest incarceration rates in the country," **said Governor Charlie Baker**. "However, we must focus on addressing recidivism by providing opportunities for certain prisoners who are willing to help themselves and participate in programs like workforce skills training opportunities that put them on the path to being productive members of society once their sentence is served."

"The steering committee, co-chairs, and working group used their deep experience and unique perspectives to work with the CSG Justice Center to produce this informative report," **said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito**. "We look forward to continuing our exchange of ideas with all stakeholders and implementing important reforms on criminal justice."

"Thank you to the CSG Justice Center and everyone who put so much time and effort into this report," **said Senate President Stan Rosenberg (D-Amherst)**. "It will help inform our work on Criminal Justice Reform this session. We will incorporate its findings into what I hope will be real substantive changes to the entire range of issues facing our criminal justice system that will reduce recidivism, improve public safety, and generate savings."

"I thank the CSG Justice Center and the Working Group for their detailed analysis and thoughtful recommendations," **said Speaker Robert DeLeo (D-Winthrop)**. "By taking an encompassing approach that includes legislative, administrative and funding components, I believe that we can make lasting change. I am particularly invested in ensuring that support programming – for example job training, substance addiction

programs, and help securing housing - is of the highest quality."

"I am grateful for the hard work and perseverance of the CSG and the Working Group, as well as the leadership and teamwork of my steering committee colleagues - Governor Baker, Lieutenant Governor Polito, President Rosenberg and Speaker DeLeo," **said Supreme Judicial Court Chief Justice Ralph Gants.** "The resulting report and legislative and policy proposals highlight the need for a comprehensive approach to reducing recidivism that combines an individualized focus on a defendant's risk, needs, and responsivity to programs; increased access to and incentives for education, job training, and treatment programs for defendants both in prison and during post-release supervision; and a recognition of the importance of facilitating a defendant's reintegration into society. By examining these issues, the CSG project has enabled us to take a step forward in reforming our criminal justice system and created a springboard for further reforms."

The justice reinvestment process began in August 2015 when leaders from all three branches of government officially requested intensive technical assistance from the CSG Justice Center with the support from The Pew Charitable Trusts and the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance. Twenty-six states have successfully used the justice reinvestment approach to date, including Idaho, North Carolina and West Virginia.

To read the full report, click [here](#).

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